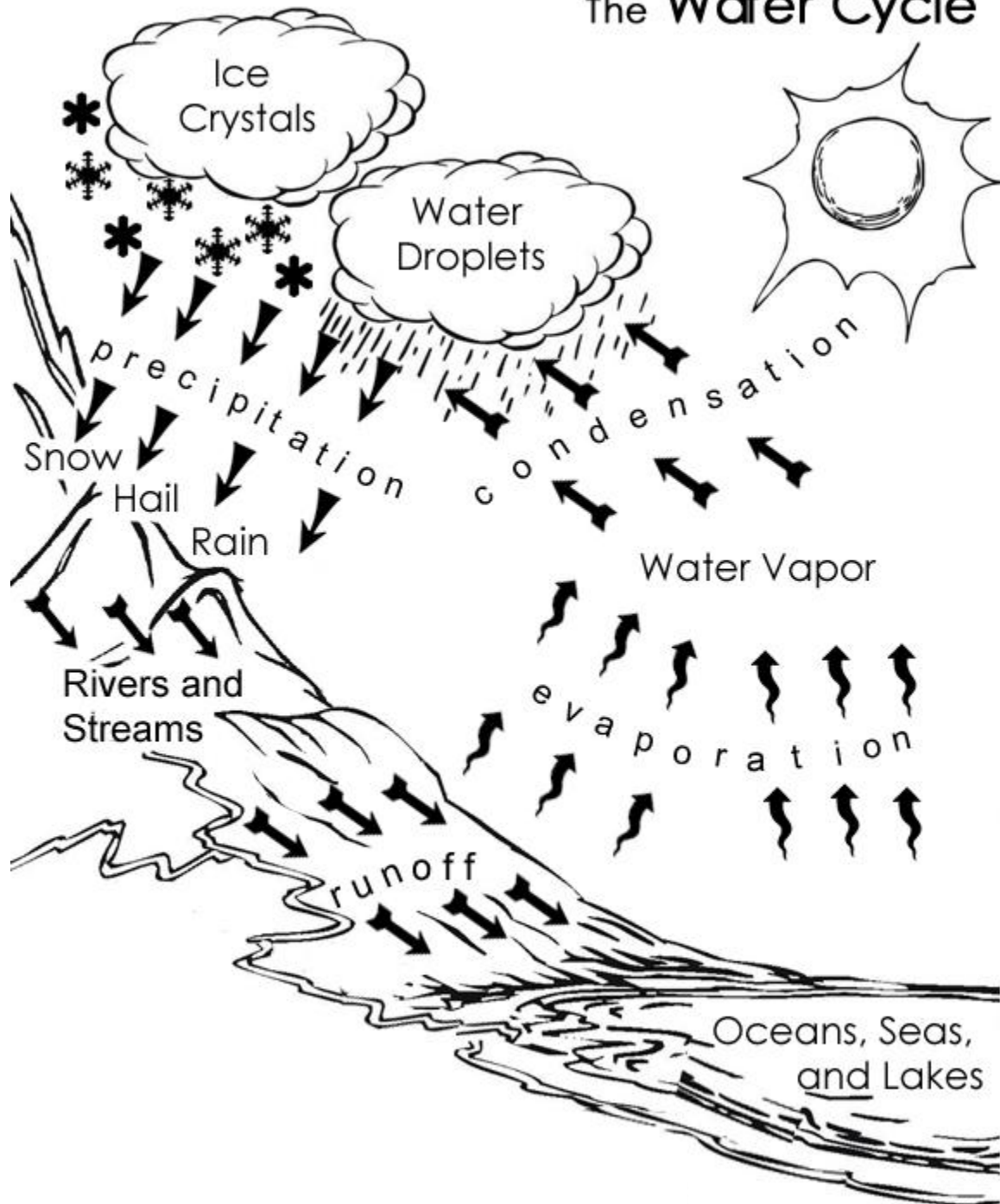


The Water Cycle



The sun's energy is the driving force behind the water cycle. The sun heats up water on land and in the oceans, lakes, and seas. The water changes from liquid to vapor in a process called evaporation. The water vapor cools and in a process called condensation forms droplets in the atmosphere. These droplets become clouds. The droplets (or ice crystals if it's cold enough) gather and then fall from the sky in a process called precipitation. This precipitation gathers in streams and rivers and flows and becomes runoff, flowing back down to the oceans, seas, and lakes.